

Buttons

Sandburg, Carl, 1878-1967

I HAVE been watching the war map slammed up for advertising in front of the
newspaper office.

Buttons--red and yellow buttons--blue and black buttons-- are shoved back and forth
across the map.

A laughing young man, sunny with freckles,
Climbs a ladder, yells a joke to somebody in the crowd,
And then fixes a yellow button one inch west
And follows the yellow button with a black button one inch west.

(Ten thousand men and boys twist on their bodies in a red soak along a river edge,
Gasping of wounds, calling for water, some rattling death in their throats.)
Who would guess what it cost to move two buttons one inch on the war map here in front
of the newspaper office where the freckle-faced young man is laughing to us?